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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN ANGOLA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 1127 (1997) of 28 August 1997, in which the Council, inter alia, requested me to report on whether the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) had taken concrete and irreversible steps to comply with all its obligations set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the resolution before the coming into force of the measures specified in paragraph 4 of the resolution. In particular, the Council demanded that UNITA implement immediately its obligations under the Lusaka Protocol (S/1994/1441, annex), including the demilitarization of its forces, transformation of its radio station Vorgan into a non-partisan broadcasting facility and full cooperation in the process of the normalization of State administration throughout Angola.

II. DEMILITARIZATION OF UNITA

2. On 11 August 1997, UNITA submitted new information to my Special Representative for Angola, Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye, on the strength and deployment of armed personnel under UNITA control and on weapons in its possession. The total strength was initially declared to be 5,448 troops, but this figure was subsequently increased to 6,052, including the personnel in the security detachment of the President of UNITA, the so-called "mining police", and "residual forces". Mr. Beye and the representatives of the three observer States (Portugal, the Russian Federation and the United States of America) reviewed this information on 14 August and found the data incomplete. They called upon UNITA to provide more credible information, but at the same time requested the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) to verify the data that had been supplied and to register and disarm the UNITA armed elements who had been presented for demobilization.

3. To that end, two special MONUA verification teams were deployed to the northern and eastern regions on 25 August to be followed by the dispatch of another three teams to the north-eastern, central and south-eastern regions. Initially the United Nations teams encountered numerous difficulties related to poor communication and coordination between UNITA headquarters and field

commanders. Although UNITA appeared to be cooperative in most areas, delays and difficulties persisted in the province of Bié, around the UNITA stronghold in Andulo and in Cuando Cubango province. In the diamond-producing north-eastern region, no verification has been conducted so far since UNITA insisted on regrouping its forces in one location instead of the three initially planned.

4. By 24 September, the five United Nations teams had conducted the verification exercise at 41 of the 42 locations envisaged, and the process at the remaining location is expected to be concluded by 27 September. As of 24 September, 3,867 UNITA residual elements of all categories had been verified and had handed over 3,317 weapons of various calibres and 46,532 types of ammunition. Of those weapons, only 56.5 per cent were found to be serviceable and in good condition, while 21.5 per cent were determined to be serviceable but in poor condition. Twenty-two per cent of the surrendered weapons were unserviceable. Furthermore, the ammunition surrendered amounted to an average of 11 rounds per rifle.

5. So far, no major artillery pieces or communication equipment have been handed over, except for six 82 mm mortars and 43 40 mm rocket launchers, casting further doubt on the credibility of the demilitarization exercise. While a thorough check of the verified troops is still ongoing, over 2,100 UNITA personnel remain to be processed by the United Nations. In addition, it is significant that no appreciable number of UNITA senior officers have been presented for demobilization. The Government and UNITA have recently held discussions concerning the future status of senior UNITA officers.

III. TRANSFORMATION OF RADIO VORGAN

6. On 1 September 1997, after protracted delays, UNITA notified the Government of Angola in writing that it would agree to use frequency modulation (FM) for the private radio station, which would be named "Rádio Despertar", to replace Radio Vorgan. UNITA received the Government's official response on 12 September, and indicated that it was undertaking the necessary technical studies in order to establish the new FM facility in major urban centres throughout the country. My Special Representative is urging the parties to expedite the setting up of this new non-partisan station.

7. In the meantime, MONUA has reported that Radio Vorgan has significantly decreased the broadcast of hostile propaganda. Some of its lead comments now seem to be more supportive of the demobilization process and national reconciliation. However, UNITA has recently resorted to a new practice of disseminating hostile propaganda from its offices abroad, especially those based in Bonn, Lisbon and Paris.

IV. NORMALIZATION OF STATE ADMINISTRATION

8. After the suspension of the normalization of State administration earlier in 1997, Mr. Beye, in collaboration with the representatives of the three observer States, undertook intensive consultations aimed at the earliest resumption of this crucial process. The consultations resulted in the adoption

of a comprehensive plan on 18 August by the Central Inter-Sectoral Operational Group, the body responsible for supervising activities in this area. Similar groups were also established at the provincial level and are operational in 13 out of 15 targeted provinces. The normalization process, which involves a total of 139 localities, many of which are situated along major land routes and the country's international boundaries, resumed on 20 August, but is still experiencing delays. From the beginning of the overall process in April until 24 September, State administrators had been installed in only 79 localities, most of which are of little strategic importance. However, tentative agreement has been reached to extend the State administration to Negage, which is the base for UNITA headquarters in the northern region, and to Cuango, a major diamond-producing area. These agreements are yet to be implemented.

9. So far, the extension of State administration to UNITA-controlled areas has been hindered by logistical and political obstacles. It is imperative that UNITA extend its full cooperation for the orderly and expeditious achievement of this important aspect of the Lusaka Protocol. There is little doubt that the delay in extension of State administration to major strategic locations such as Andulo, Bailundo, Cuango, Mavinga and Negage is a result of political considerations. In some provinces, such as Bié, Huambo and Lunda Norte, UNITA has not extended its full cooperation to the process. The earliest extension of State administration to the diamond-rich province of Lunda Norte would be of particular significance, and MONUA is trying to arrange a meeting between UNITA representatives and the governor of the province. There have also been instances where UNITA militants have raised the issue of national symbols, such as the national anthem and flag, and have questioned the neutrality and actions of the national police. According to MONUA, however, except for a few occasions, the behaviour of the national police has been generally acceptable.

10. It should be acknowledged that, in some provinces, local government authorities, citing security reasons, have been cautious about establishing a presence in areas formerly under UNITA control. Moreover, the Government has emphasized the need to disarm UNITA elements wherever their presence has been declared before the extension of State administration takes place. MONUA is endeavouring to ensure that this is carried out wherever applicable. Logistical problems, such as poor communications and coordination between the parties, and often within their ranks, as well as the country's ravaged infrastructure and presence of landmines, have also contributed to delays in the implementation of the agreed timetable for the extension of State administration.

11. The general population has welcomed the normalization of State administration in the hope that it will lead to the improvement of their daily lives and to the free circulation of people and goods. Public awareness campaigns in support of this important exercise have helped to allay some of the concerns expressed by the people. In addition to participating in these activities, MONUA has also provided its good offices and logistical and security support to facilitate the smooth implementation of this crucial aspect of the Lusaka Protocol.

V. OBSERVATIONS

12. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1127 (1997) on 28 August 1997, the military situation in Angola has remained relatively calm and stable, as confirmed at the meeting of the Joint Commission on 23 September. On 24 September, my Special Representative met separately with President José Eduarado dos Santos and Mr. Jonas Savimbi to take stock of the progress made in the implementation of resolution 1127 (1997). During his discussion with Mr. Savimbi, Mr. Beye was assured that UNITA was determined to take further steps to comply with the provisions of the resolution.

13. However, the demilitarization of UNITA forces, which is a key provision of the Lusaka Protocol and an element critical to the success of the entire peace process, is not yet complete even though almost three years have passed since the signing of the agreement. MONUA and the observer States consider that the figure of 6,052 claimed by UNITA to be the total of its residual troops remains unconvincing. They are also of the view that the quality and quantity of weapons and ammunition surrendered to MONUA by these residual troops are insignificant.

14. At the same time, it must be recognized that some advances have been made towards the establishment of a non-partisan FM broadcast facility to replace Radio Vorgan, which has recently made tangible efforts to reduce the level of hostile propaganda. However, the final steps in this process are long overdue and expeditious actions are required.

15. With regard to the normalization of State administration, while a significant number of localities have been handed over to the Government during the past few weeks, no progress has been registered in the extension of government authority to the five strategically important areas mentioned in paragraph 9 above. In addition, the overall slow pace of the process continues to raise doubts about the intentions of UNITA.

16. In the circumstances, I have to state that, at the time of writing of the present report, I am not yet in a position to advise the Security Council that UNITA has taken the necessary steps to comply with all the obligations set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 of its resolution 1127 (1997). Such steps would have to include, in particular, the immediate provision by UNITA to the United Nations of credible and verifiable information about the strength of the residual armed elements and weapons, and to allow the State administration to be extended to strategically important areas of the country.

17. I urge the two Angolan parties, but in particular UNITA, to comply with all the provisions of Security Council resolution 1127 (1997) and to complete fully and without any further delay the implementation of the remaining tasks under the Lusaka Protocol. It is only on this basis that it will be possible to lead the peace process to a successful conclusion and to ensure genuine stability and national reconciliation in Angola. In the meantime, I shall continue to monitor developments closely and to bring to the attention of the Security Council any further progress that may be made towards meeting the goals of resolution 1127 (1997) on the peace process.